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ABSTRACT

This planning model outlines eight steps that enable local education agencies to formulate a program for staff development. The program is designed to modify organizational, managerial, and instructional practices that inhibit reading success among both children and adults. The eight action steps are: (1) assess district-wide reading needs; (2) identify resources and constraints; (3) formulate and organize performance objectives for selected priority items; (4) generate, analyze, and select alternatives; (5) implement the plan of action; (6) evaluate the program's effectiveness (process and product); (7) modify the plan on the basis of feedback; and (8) maintain the desired behavior (planned change). For each of the action steps definitions, procedures to use, and special considerations are briefly discussed. (MB)

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CONNECTICUT RIGHT TO READ
PROGRAM PLANNING MODEL

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CS003493

PLANNING MODEL

GOAL: To enable local education agencies to formulate a continuous, dynamic program for staff development designed to modify organizational, managerial, and instructional practices that inhibit reading success among both children and adults.

ACTION STEPS:*

I. ASSESS DISTRICT-WIDE READING NEEDS

II. IDENTIFY RESOURCES AND CONSTRAINTS

III. FORMULATE AND ORGANIZE PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES FOR SELECTED PRIORITY ITEMS (D)**

IV. GENERATE, ANALYZE AND SELECT ALTERNATIVES (D)

V. IMPLEMENT THE PLAN OF ACTION

VI. EVALUATE THE PROGRAM'S EFFECTIVENESS (PROCESS AND PRODUCT)

VII. MODIFY THE PLAN ON THE BASIS OF FEEDBACK (D)

VIII. MAINTAIN THE DESIRED BEHAVIOR (PLANNED CHANGE) (D)

* These are not discrete steps.
** (D) Represents points at which decisions are made.

CREDIT

Components of this planning model were adapted from:

1. Brieve, Fred J., A. P. Johnston, and Ken M. Young. Educational Planning. Ohio: Charles A. Jones Publishing Company, 1973.
2. Project Aristotle Symposium NISA, 1967, Task Group VI, "Systems Approach to Education," as adopted by the National Right to Read Program at the State Mini-Planning Conference, February, 1974.

I. ASSESS DISTRICT-WIDE READING NEEDS

A. Definition: A need can be defined as the gap or distance which exists between what actually is, and what has been determined should be. A needs assessment is the procedure from which the statement and definition of the underlying need and the problem(s) to be overcome is derived.

B. Procedures:

1. Examine the state needs assessment instrument with the task force.
2. Formulate any additional descriptive performance objectives the task force feels are necessary.
3. Gather the data necessary to respond to the instrument.
4. Respond to the instrument in one of the following ways:
   - every staff member individually
   - a random sampling of staff members designed to represent the total staff
   - staff members organized in committees to represent the total staff.
5. Tabulate the data and fill out the data tabulation report.
6. Prioritize the items rated 1, 2, or 3, beginning with the lowest rated items (1). To "prioritize" items is to rank them according to their importance in total goal achievement and their success potential.

C. Special Considerations:

1. Has the total population (preschool - adult) been considered in responding to the instrument?
2. Have the needs been determined on the basis of verifiable data rather than hunches or guesses?

II. IDENTIFY RESOURCES AND CONSTRAINTS

A. Definition: The process of identifying resources and constraints is an organized way of determining precisely what people or things will facilitate the attainment of the objective(s) and which will block the attainment of the objective(s). In this context it is necessary to determine feasibility, which is defined as the ability of the system to overcome the constraints.

B. Procedures:

1. Develop a complete list of resources and constraints the district must work with or against to accomplish each prioritized item rated 1, 2, or 3 (e.g., attitudes, skills, timing, money, facilities, likely consequences, etc.).
2. Identify the sources of the constraints.
3. Select the "target items" for improvement.

C. Special Considerations:

1. Has the task force separated: Facts from assumptions? Intuition from bias? Needs from pressures?
2. Have conventional or pet solutions created unnecessary constraints?

III. FORMULATE AND ORGANIZE PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES FOR SELECTED PRIORITY ITEMS

A. Definition: Performance objectives are objectives that specify outcomes in measurable terms. They must be specific, stating precisely the following conditions:

1. What is to be done to demonstrate completion?
2. By whom is it to be done; that is, who will display the outcome?
3. Under what conditions is the outcome to be demonstrated?
4. What criteria will be used to determine if the outcome has been achieved?

B. Procedures:

1. List the "target items" selected for improvement as performance objectives.
2. Determine whether or not each stated performance objective addresses the overall "target item."

C. Special Considerations:

1. Do the performance objectives satisfy the real need?
2. Are the performance objectives vague or ambiguous statements?
3. Are the conditions described in the performance objectives realistic and valid in light of the true need(s)?
4. Have objectives been deleted because they are difficult to measure?
5. Have personal bias and pressure groups influenced the priorities?
6. Have completion dates been set for all functions and tasks?

IV. GENERATE, ANALYZE AND SELECT ALTERNATIVES

A. Definition: The generation of alternatives is a procedure in which several different strategies are suggested that will bring about achievement of the stated performance objective. Each alternative must be analyzed and a selection made in terms of benefits, cost, risk, and time constraints.

B. Procedures:

1. Elicit a number of approaches (alternatives) from the task force for each objective without commenting or passing judgment at this point.
2. Solicit ideas and information from sources other than the task force.
3. Specify the criteria to be used to select the most promising alternatives.
4. Select the most feasible alternatives on the basis of the analysis and personal judgment.
5. List the alternatives selected (action steps) for each performance objective in logical sequence.
6. List each performance objective ("target item") with its action steps on a time line.

C. Special Considerations:

1. Has the task force evaluated the alternatives which were proposed?
2. Has enough information been provided about suggested alternatives?
3. Are training activities the only alternatives for changing human behavior?
4. Was the task force too quick to discard some usable alternatives?
5. Have all the vital criteria been considered?
6. Has the task force predetermined the relative importance of the criteria due to personal bias--that is, according to what they like or don't like?
7. Were decisions made without sufficient information?
8. Has the task force rationalized a predetermined conclusion?
9. Is it possible to use some parts of each alternative or a combination of several alternatives to achieve the objective?
10. Is it really possible to achieve the objective?

V. IMPLEMENT THE PLAN OF ACTION

A. Definition: To implement the plan of action means to translate the action steps (selected alternatives) for each performance objective into action.

B. Procedures:

1. Implement the action steps.
2. Monitor the progress of the program.
3. Allow the action steps (selected alternatives) adequate time and scope to prove or disprove themselves.

C. Special Considerations:

1. Has the staff involved in the implementation of the program (plan) been adequately prepared for participation?
2. Does open communication exist between the task force, district and building administration, and the staff?
3. Do discrepancies exist between the goals of the staff and the goals of the organization to the extent that it will become a factor inhibiting implementation?
4. Do those involved in implementing the strategy practice what they preach?
5. Do those who have been charged with the implementation of the program (plan) have the necessary authority to do so?

VI. EVALUATE THE PROGRAM'S EFFECTIVENESS (PROCESS AND PRODUCT)

A. Definition: Evaluation is the process of providing information for making educational decisions. In this context the information will be provided by assessing the degree of conformity or discrepancy between the performance objectives and the actual performance.

B. Procedures:

1. Identify the changes (from the performance objectives) that the program should demonstrate at the end of the first year.
2. Determine whether or not the objectives have been achieved.
3.* Collect norm-referenced test data on all fifth grade students in the district prior to and at the conclusion of the initial year of the program.
4.* Determine the student growth that has taken place during the school year by comparing the pre and post test results.

C. Special Considerations:

1. Does the process evaluation measure the same parameters specified in the performance objectives?
2. Is the change in behavior or the retention of a change in behavior being measured?
3. Have sufficient resources been committed to carry out the process evaluation?

* The collection and analysis of the norm-referenced test data will be done by the independent evaluator of the Connecticut Right to Read state program.

VII. MODIFY THE PLAN ON THE BASIS OF FEEDBACK

A. Definition: Modifying the plan is the process of making changes in the plan as determined to be necessary by feedback and the evaluation results. The resultant changes may constitute a revision of the original plan or a new plan stemming from the original plan for the next stage of the program.

B. Procedures:

1. Determine the degree of discrepancy between the stated performance objectives and the actual performance.
2. Determine the probable source/cause of the discrepancy.
3. Analyze the plan (performance objectives) as a possible source/cause of the discrepancy.
4. Modify the plan on the basis of the determined source/cause of the discrepancy between the stated performance objectives and the actual performance.

C. Special Considerations:

1. Is the task force willing to admit that there are discrepancies which require corrective action or are they blaming it on "start up" problems?
2. Is the plan actually being implemented as designed?

VIII. MAINTAIN THE DESIRED BEHAVIOR (PLANNED CHANGE)

A. Definition: Keeping the performance up to standard. Providing feedback on the quality of the work on a continuing basis.

B. Procedures:

1. Examine the immediate, the long term, and the overall consequences of performance or nonperformance.
2. Determine whether the problem is one of acquisition (can't do) or maintenance (won't do).

C. Special Considerations:

1. Is the desired behavior reinforced?
2. Are behaviors that conflict with the desired behavior reinforced?